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ABSTRACT

Current inservice programs are criticized on the grounds that they do not achieve the objective of improving teachers' mastery of their subjects. It is suggested that these programs can be improved by increasing professional communication between teachers, providing more assistance from specialized consultants, increasing teacher participation in educational research, and promoting greater contact with schools of education. Four exemplary inservice programs are described and a discussion is given on the reasons for their success. (JD)

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EDUCATION'S STEPCHILD, INSERVICE TRAINING

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by

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A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS PAPER

"Though many do not like to admit it, not all schoolteachers are well prepared for the present-day requirements of the classroom. How many have been able to maintain study in their fields so that they are not peddling from empty wagons?" (Page 1)

"The most fundamental inservice training is the counseling of teachers by administrators on a one-to-one basis." (Page 9)

"The more I visit schools around the country, the more I am struck by the singleness of purpose and the lack of communication among teachers. Any one may know what he is about, but none seems to know what the others are doing." (Page 11)

"Schools and teachers can make good use of consultants. Although the cameo appearance of a popular speaker does little more than give teachers a day off, the retention of qualified consultants can make their days *on* significantly more productive." (Page 13)

"For many inservice activities, schools might look to insiders in the first place. Who are the master teachers? Will they share their experience?" (Page 14)

"Any school that sponsors inservice sessions on the 'rights of students and teachers' and neglects research that points to available programs for improving teaching and learning ought to do some rethinking." (Page 15)

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FOREWORD

This paper is about the inservice training of schoolteachers—the importance of inservice training, its present shortcomings, its prospect and promise.* The view of one experienced teacher and administrator, it does not pretend to be an official, data-based study with Olympian findings; nor is it yet another educational "model" for others to follow. In its candid appraisal of the way schools actually function, however, the paper offers a different view from other treatments of the subject, which tend to neglect or gloss over the functional facts of school life.

Although inservice training ought to be a vitally important part of the preparation of teachers to meet their responsibilities, it has been called a stepchild of American education. The implication is unfortunate not only because many teachers enter their profession inadequately prepared, or because declining enrollments mean that the schools will depend increasingly on "old" teachers who need "retreading." The fact is that good teachers develop their competence—their goodness, if you will—during the course of experience. Even if preservice training were unexceptionably first-rate, inservice training would be vitally important.

In Peter Greer's view, the first purpose of inservice training is to make teachers masters of the subjects they teach, and therefore more effective teachers of those subjects. He concedes that there are other legitimate purposes—making teachers familiar with new classroom approaches and materials, for example, or training them in the practical use of test results. But he rejects such activities as one-day sessions on teachers' rights and workshops on being burned out as valid inservice education.

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*For the sake of consistency, the words "preservice" and "inservice" are not hyphenated in this paper.

If he comes down hard on inservice training as it is, Greer's purpose is to put in bold relief the contrast between present conditions and the condition that must be achieved if inservice training is to become worthwhile—if, indeed, teaching in America is dependably to bring about the result of learning. Many may take exception to the criticisms and judgments he has to make; but most teachers will probably share his view that inservice training is sadly deficient, and agree that change for the better is imperative.

Peter Greer is Superintendent of Schools in Portland, Maine. With degrees from the University of New Hampshire and Boston University, he has been a high school history teacher and department chairman, as well as an elected school board member. From 1971-1974 he was Associate Director of the National Humanities Faculty, which is heavily committed to the improvement of inservice training.

James Howard
Editor

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Introduction

Flying across country on a commercial airliner, a well-dressed gentleman sitting next to a friend of mine began to chat.

"What do you do for a living?"

"I am a teacher," said my friend. "What do you do?"

"I'm in the copper industry," he replied.

They talked for a while about the state of education and the opportunities in industry before the stranger made this powerful statement:

"You know, when I make a mistake at my company, we lose $50,000 that day. When you make a mistake, all you do is screw up a bunch of kids."

Unfortunately, too many have lost sight of the importance of what the teacher does in the classroom. Not only is the importance of teaching lost on some, but the new and steady stream of demands on today's teacher are not well known or understood. Although parents appear to be supportive of the schools, and while educators cite research to show that students today stay in school longer and learn more than they once did, the media reflect or perhaps lead the general citizenry in a regular pounding of education in the United States. We are told that education *isn't* as good as it was in the previous decade, and that American education is in deep trouble.

Though many do not like to admit it, not all schoolteachers are well prepared for the present-day requirements of the classroom. How many have been able to maintain study in their fields so that they are not peddling from empty wagons? How many history teachers do their subject injustice, for example, because they have never taken courses dealing with the period 1945 to the present? How many are caught between the new and the old math, or between lab-oriented and non-lab-oriented science curricula? At a time when there is

more stress on the teaching of reading in all subjects, how many know anything about teaching reading in a history or a science class? How many teachers write well enough to teach writing competently?

Beyond the need to keep up with developments in their fields, how many are trained to deal with students who have learning disabilities, emotional problems, physical handicaps, or combinations of all three? Under the new dispensation of no-fault parenthood and students' rights, how many schoolteachers have the information they need to be tough-minded as well as humane with unwilling or unruly students?

The quality of classroom teaching can be dramatically improved if there is wider understanding of how schools operate and how effective inservice programs can flourish within their operation. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to improvement is the fact that most teachers and administrators have accepted the norm of ineffectuality regarding inservice activity. Educators, like other human beings, like routine; and they are likely to resist changes that upset the status quo. To improve inservice training, they will have to risk the discomfort of change.

The discussion that follows seeks to unravel, rather than cut, the Gordian knot of upgrading teachers. In Part I, there is a close look at the kind of inservice programs one finds in school systems throughout the country. Part II suggests how inservice can be improved; and Part III describes several exemplary programs. Part IV is a summing up.

I. Inservice Education As It Is

No One Seems to Learn

Magazines and journals publish articles about it; teachers' contracts have airtight sections about it; conventions feature speakers to talk about it; researchers purport to enlighten it; and committees of administrators and teachers constantly fret over it. With so much attention, one might think that inservice education needed no more. Yet somewhere out there there must be a learning disability when it comes to the inservice training of schoolteachers. For all the palaver, no one seems to learn.

One reason may be that teachers rarely read what others write on the subject. Education magazines and professional journals carry glowing accounts of programs that have worked in one school or another, but teachers dismiss these as "models" that have no relevance to their "unique" situations. Often they are justified in so doing. It is disappointing to read about a project and write for more information, only to learn that the project is "difficult to explain in a letter," or that the author has taken another position, or that the project has been discontinued. Responding to an article, I once wrote several people who were teaching leadership to gifted students. Of the eleven who replied, three apologized for their courses, and eight were not even teaching such courses because of budgetary or other reasons.

More to the point is the fact that few classroom teachers subscribe to the magazines or belong to the professional associations that publish the journals. They haven't the time or the inclination to read them (the articles do not, as a rule, afford stimulating reading); nor are they willing to pay the price, on top of the membership dues they must pay their local, state, and national organizations. And when administrators budget for single copies for teaching departments or the school library, the magazines and journals tend to gather dust. Department chairmen are too busy to do their colleagues' reading; librarians conscientiously consign them to that dreary part of their domains known as the "Professional Library."

If teachers pay scant attention to the magazines and journals, those who are in charge of inservice programs pay no more to the extensive research on the subject. Their time is precious, too; and few principals and central office administrators understand the language or the value of research. Ordinarily their exposure to this function of education has been limited to courses they took to meet degree or certification requirements. Without benefit from this source, they tend to make common mistakes again and again. Perhaps a quick reading of this week's issue of *Education USA* prompts them to believe that *all* teachers want to be involved in planning inservice, or that outside consultants enliven the interest of all; or that administrators are not needed in planning, or that years of experience are the key to attracting teachers to inservice; or that money paid for their extra time is the paramount reward teachers desire. I suggest that many inservice leaders avoid the lessons of research and keep practicing their bad swings.

Still another reason why there has been so little constructive action is that schools and school systems often do not know how or what to plan. All the requirements of Federal and state legislation, court decisions, and societal pressure make careful planning difficult if not impossible. While the public assumes that they carry on systematic evaluation of the education they offer, the schools are in fact reacting to a random variety of relentless external pressures. As a result, inservice training is reduced to shallow answers to ever-new demands—special education; CETA, Title I, and Title IX regulations; competency-testing; career and bilingual education; sex education and family living; student identification procedures for breakfast programs; immunization; truancy laws that direct schools to spend inordinate time coaxing unwilling students back. An entire school can become frantic and merely reactive with so many things to do. One of the symptoms is loss of confidence to plan; the habit of thinking deteriorates. When an inservice day comes along—scheduled with the blessing of the administration and written into the contracts negotiated with the teachers' union—plans are made at the last moment, and then only to get the day over with.

Long-range and consistent planning is virtually precluded in many schools by the instability of personnel. Highly regarded teachers become administrators or guidance counselors. Junior high teachers watch resignations with great interest so they can apply for transfer to the high school. Teachers hired under Federal or state grants come and go, since they are rarely picked up under local funding in the third year. Elementary teachers are moved into split grades or shuffled around as buildings are closed because of declining enrollments.

Administrative personnel change faster than the fortunes of someone playing Uncle Wiggly. Department chairmen become assistant principals, assistant principals become principals, principals are shuffled around. Some principals become assistant superintendents; and assistant superintendents become superintendents—in another school system. I am convinced that educators have learned that if one waits long enough, things will change. So why, they reason, invest any genuine effort in learning something in an inservice program? This attitude breeds a contempt of inservice or, worse, a sort of fail-safe attitude that takes teachers to the brink of an inservice program, where they do nothing but go through the motions.

Before we look at inservice training as it is, let me cite one more condition—perhaps the most serious, if not the most difficult—that works against effective inservice, namely, the supposition that the content of their teaching—mathematics, English, history, science, and so on—is not an appropriate matter for inservice training programs. The supposition depends on several misconceptions. One is that only those who teach college-bound students really need to be well-versed in their subjects. Another is that the ideal teacher is one who gets along well with kids, participates in coaching and extracurricular activities, and has superb discipline in the classroom. A third misconception is that teachers are not interested in any inservice that includes more study of their academic disciplines. Still another is that the teaching of attitudes is more important than the teaching of knowledge. Students must of course feel good about themselves, and feel

good about learning, before real learning can take place. However, developing such attitudes is not the main business of schools. A fifth mistaken idea is that students don't want to learn, that they don't want to hear from a teacher who is knowledgeable, that they want only to discuss and participate. The worst misconception is that students are so drugged up and violent that we need to learn self-defense, not more subject matter.

Knowledge of a discipline is fundamental, not ornamental, to inservice education programs. Since the true learning place is where teachers are willing to teach, students are willing to learn, and something worthwhile is being taught, it is absolutely paramount that teachers know what they are teaching. I submit that nine out of every ten favorite teachers are those who are personable, who have varied techniques, *and who know their subjects cold.* Without control or mastery of the subject, the classroom teacher cannot make the references and the analogies, cannot skillfully probe or question a student response, cannot effectively organize lesson plans, cannot find different ways of explaining important things to students of different abilities and interests. The falling away from subject matter and the flight to IALAC ("I am lovable and capable") affective education is a disgrace. A tip-off to the state of affairs is to review the questions asked of a teacher applicant during an interview. The typical candidate is asked to talk about his own experience, or hers, to explain a successful technique, react to a hypothetical discipline problem, decide what animal he would like to be, and discuss what else he can do besides teach. I was once chastised by two fine administrators because I asked too many questions about history during interviews for a history teacher. Schools need to be tougher in insisting on teachers who know their fields. It is no secret that the National Teacher Examinations are of more interest to school boards than they once were.

Observances of the Inservice Custom

In spite of so many adverse conditions, most schools observe the inservice custom. It has become an unquestioned activity

of most school districts; its absence (rightly or wrongly) connotes an inferior system. I was once in a system where the administrators waited for teachers to suggest the inservice plans (as stipulated by contract), while the teachers, because they had no time for planning, wanted the administrators to make suggestions. As time ran out, the administrators usually decided on some sort of program that could easily be put together in short order. Ordinarily, the program included a speaker from the nearby college, and "work" on the curriculum. There was always a long break for lunch.

The importance attached to the custom is suggested by the fact that provision for inservice days is made in the contracts teachers' unions negotiate with school boards. A contract may read, "The number of afternoons devoted to this purpose shall not exceed two each month." Since afternoon inservice sessions are likely to find teachers unresponsive, entire schooldays are commonly given over to the business. Or it is scheduled on weekends or during the summer, when teachers are paid for their extra time.

Inservice activity takes a variety of forms. In districts where the teaching staff numbers between three and five hundred, all teachers, K-12, may be brought together to listen to an "expert." The expert gives a speech deemed to be of interest or importance, and his presentation may or may not be followed by group discussions. Easy to arrange, this kind of program is meant to tease minds or to show off the latest rage on the speakers' circuit, and it seldom achieves anything of lasting value. I remember one speaker who held faculty attention by having them stand on chairs and quack like ducks.

Inservice programs are also held for teachers in their own schools. Teachers (or teachers and administrators together) decide on a topic and a plan. This procedure is likely to be effective when, for example, a regional accrediting organization has recently visited the school and made recommendations that require staff attention. It can be effective any time a school's professional staff recognizes its needs. Too often, however, teachers and administrators have not identified the educational needs of their school, with the result that their in-

service plan evolves as a scramble to do *something* to meet the stipulations of a contract or the expectations of parents whose children have a schoolday free.

Teachers who take part in projects initiated by the central office of a district may have what amounts to inservice training. Working on a competency test for their school system helped teachers of a district in Maine to isolate topics for study and to set goals for their students. Although there are distinct advantages to such serendipitous inservice training, there are drawbacks as well. When a project directly concerns academic subject matter (and not all such projects do), teachers spend most of their time writing behavioral objectives like, "The student will be able to write a one-page essay in 20 minutes, making no more than one punctuation error." And even when projects serve valid inservice purposes, not all teachers can or will participate. Many have other after-school obligations (coaching, driver education, second jobs) and most are already exhausted after a full day of teaching.

Occasionally individual teachers use allotted inservice time to carry out approved programs of their own. One may spend the time working on a new course; another may visit schools in a neighboring district. Still another may write up Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) for special education students. The practical difficulty with such independent programs is the temptation of teachers to use their inservice time to catch up with unfinished classroom business—and accomplish little to enhance their own education.

Some teachers also use time to take courses at nearby colleges and universities. Their objective, however, may be nothing more than to get credits they need to move up a salary scale or to meet requirements for recertification. "Take the course and be done with it" is a common attitude. Most of the courses they take deal with techniques or methods, not with the content of their teaching. A good guess is that not more than 20 percent deal with hard-core content. And the reason is simple. A course like "U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1898" requires a lot of reading, probably a major paper, and tough essay tests.

The most fundamental inservice training is the counseling of teachers by administrators on a one-to-one basis. This ought to be a result of the common practice principals and other administrators make of classroom evaluations. It is not always a result, however—perhaps not even often. Many administrators visit teachers in their classrooms only to keep their records up to date with documentation of good and bad performances. And while they are likely to be good at keeping the lids on their buildings, maintaining enviable public relations, or working effectively with curriculum matters, they are not dependably skillful when it comes to helping teachers become better practitioners. The typical advice on teacher evaluations makes unexciting reading: "Maintain your loyalty . . . Use more audio-visual techniques . . . Individualize more . . . Fully participate in school activities."

Inservice training, as it is, does little to improve the quality of teaching. The one thing I remember from seven years of it as a teacher was the fact that I didn't have to wear a tie.

Teacher Colleges; Teacher Centers

The demand for accountability in education is causing a surge of interest and new activity in the inservice enterprise. Something must be done to assure a doubting public that steps are being taken to staff America's classrooms with competent teachers.

At a conference of the recently organized National Council on Inservice Education, more than 250 educators representing 27 states came together to learn what is happening over the nation. That conference is likely to stimulate the development of state-directed plans intended to provide models and flexibility for local schools to carry out their own inservice programs. My hunch, however, is that in the 1980's state departments of education, provided with massive funding, will appoint state inservice directors to draw up guidelines and implement state plans. Given the feeling toward and the record of state education agencies, I am not sanguine about the prospect. The guidelines are likely to call for so many local committees (to avoid offending any group, teacher, or ad-

ministrator) that the first steps will be taken slowly. Classroom teachers and administrators are plain tired of serving on committees.

Teacher-education institutions, which have not always effectively taught prospective teachers, are clamoring for and receiving grants to improve inservice. I am fascinated. Teacher-education institutions are supposed to provide local schools with pools of qualified teachers. While they constantly bemoan the inferior quality of entering students, they invite unqualified students to attend so that they can meet financial obligations or counter charges of elitism. They are supposed to sense and assess changing needs in the pre-college schools. Yet, from their students one hears the same stories year after year—of professors who haven't been out in the field for ten years, of professors who offer the same course under the guise of different titles. And year after year, school-hiring panels interview candidates who cannot write well, do not know the subjects they are to teach, and lack the tools and techniques teachers require. The result is that many schools must provide inservice training in fundamental skills, rather than improve already attained skills. I believe that many teacher-training institutions are aware of their weaknesses, but tenure, disdain for departments of education, and other restraints limit the prospect of change.

The new Federal Teacher Center Program was approved by Congress in 1976, but not funded before the school year 1978-1979. Hailed as a breakthrough because it appeared to give teachers control of their own inservice training, the program has yet to prove itself.

The first 61 federally funded centers promptly became a bone of contention for teachers' unions. The issue was the alleged over-representation of NEA teachers both on the panel that judged applications for grants and on local advisory committees that govern individual centers. I predict that there will be more contention—with school boards and administrators, who do not want to lose their control of teacher-improvement programs within their districts, as well as with teacher education institutions which want to control the cur-

riculum of teacher training. Teacher centers are in danger of becoming like the monastery where the monks, fighting over who should fill holy water fonts and who should make beds, forgot why they were in the monastery. Moreover, I question whether teacher centers can offer resources and training sufficiently different from existing resources and training to be of much attraction or value.

Sub-Total

Readers who have come this far don't need a sub-total to show that I have a dim view of inservice education as it is. They may be reminded, however, that the view has become mine after a good many years of experience both as a teacher and an administrator. Although it is an honest view and, I believe, accurate, I acknowledge that because it is mine, it must be a limited view. It is not a hopeless view, however, and Part II begins with a redeeming word.

II. Inservice Education As It Can Be

Nevertheless, there are schools and school systems, teachers and administrators, consultants and agencies that have succeeded in making inservice education effective. Let me draw on their success to suggest ways in which inservice education may be made better than it is.

Making Professional Conversation

The more I visit schools around the country, the more I am struck by the singleness of purpose and the lack of communication among teachers. Any one may know what he is about, but none seems to know what the others are doing. In their lounges teachers vent frustrations, talk about sports, and relax during free periods. After school, they have little contact. Many have coaching duties and extra-curricular activities. Not a few have second jobs. Those who do come together are likely to be close friends or perhaps teachers involved in an interdisciplinary course for which they must plan. Incidentally, this lack of conversation may be one reason some teachers mentally or physically leave the classroom forever.

Of course, when a school does not know where it is or where it should be going, teachers have little basis for professional conversation; and when legislatures, courts, and society make so many different demands on the schools, this lack of a sense of direction is all too common. The condition only makes the need for communication among teachers more important than ever.

What can be done to generate good professional conversation among teachers? to prompt them to share ideas about the subjects they teach? Many things can be done, but there is no guarantee that they will all work. I can guarantee only that none will work unless it is tried.

It is certainly worth trying to get teachers to read some of the articles that are now so widely unread. Articles dealing with the subject matter of a school's basic curriculum, or with techniques of teaching those subjects, are valuable inservice tools. For example, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) "How to Do It Series" is useful, as is their journal, *Social Education*. Excellent ideas are given in "It Starts in the Classroom," a periodical published by the National School Public Relations Association, and in *Instructor* magazine. *Music Educators Journal*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, and *School Review* are also helpful. My favorite, however, is *Curriculum Review*, which evaluates textbooks and supplementary materials for all areas of the K-12 curriculum. Published five times a year, it also reports trends in curriculum development.

I suggest that as a first step, administrators and librarians agree that it will be part of the librarian's responsibility to find out or be told what the interests and needs of teachers are, and to scan periodicals and booklists for material that will serve their interests and help to meet their needs. I suggest, further, that administrators put money in every teaching department's account, earmarked for the chairman's (or another spokesman's) membership in the national association concerned with the department's discipline.

Simple measures like these may serve to get some teachers reading, but not necessarily sharing material that has inser-

vice value. To promote sharing, periodic breakfast meetings have merit; and so does the idea of requesting and scheduling groups of teachers to give short reports at faculty meetings. Faculty members learn what their colleagues are doing and receive ideas from others. Many interdisciplinary courses have been started in this way. The purpose of such schemes is to make the reading and sharing of useful professional material the accepted practice—the standard operating procedure—of a faculty.

A school system that has defined its goals can make good use of a faculty newsletter which affords teachers the opportunity to think and write and share ideas of ways to accomplish common teaching objectives. Still another way to foster professional discussion is to form networks of teachers in the different schools of a district or limited geographical area. In the area of Portland, Maine, for example, history teachers representing a total of nine public and private schools meet three times a year to discuss their reading or hold seminars with students. The group has even published a series of teaching units in United States history and organized a student project that resulted in a publication of student essays on "The Future of the American Dream."

Going More Formal

The importance of what I have called professional conversation goes far beyond the subject of inservice training, but it does realize a very basic, do-it-yourself kind of inservice experience. Beyond such self-help, schools and teachers can make good use of consultants. Although the cameo appearance of a popular speaker does little more than give teachers a day off, the retention of qualified consultants can make their days *on* significantly more productive. To be realistic I must acknowledge that school districts do not give high priority to this kind of expenditure. Show me the district that will put up $15,000 or $25,000 for a full-time inservice consultant, and I'll show you how to make full-time use of one! But effective inservice consulting need not be formidably expensive. If a school system decides to make teaching reading, for example, or

writing, an across-the-curriculum responsibility, a consultant might be retained on a part-time but regular basis to train teachers in each of the school's academic departments.

And there are alternatives to the use of consultants in structured inservice activity. One is to fund an adaption center where teachers can retreat from time to time to study, free of their regular duties. The funding would meet the expense of well-qualified standby teachers (substitutes or retired teachers) to take over for a few days while a regular faculty member pursues his study. The regular teacher and the standby might even plan a day or two of team-teaching on the former's return to the classroom so as to assure smooth transition.

One school system developed a variation of this scheme in order to train teachers to deal more effectively with student behavior changes. Two "itinerant" teachers were hired. They were trained in a six-week session at a school for students with emotional problems. Regular teachers then volunteered to be released from their duties for the same training, while the itinerants took over their classes. As a result, that school system has ten regular faculty members trained and practiced in dealing with behavior changes. Those teachers are not only more competent and confident because of their new skills, but they are also able to train other teachers in their own schools.

For many inservice activities, schools might look to insiders in the first place. Who are the master teachers? Will they share their experience? Once they are identified, they can sign up to conduct sessions of interest or value to others. One school system has created a Curricula Senate this way. A hundred teachers signed up for six sessions led by master teachers that included topics like questioning strategies, the uses of oral history, how to teach the holocaust, how to teach about farming in four decades of U.S. history, teaching metrics. The popularity of this idea counters the notion of teacher burn-out.

Teachers' conference *can*, but in my experience seldom *do* offer valid inservice activities. More often than not, they provide rest and recreation. Speakers are brought on for their

entertainment value, and workshops attract conference participants who are looking for quick fixes. These sessions last at least an hour and include such topics as "Grooving With Zeus," "Learning Art Through Fan Cards," or "Teaching the Humanities Through Slides." In the latter course, teachers viewed slides that were flashed every three seconds against gigantic weather balloons. At the end of the show, the participants formed small groups to discuss *their feelings.*

I remember one conference that actually dared to schedule a session on *The Federalist Papers.* Four people attended the session, while in the next room there was standing room only at a session on techniques of teaching values clarification. Not until teachers make it clear that they are willing to work hard to improve, and not until conference organizers believe it, are conferences likely to be useful for much more than rest and recreation. In the meantime, I intend to throw away any conference brochure that has more than two lines about sightseeing, golf, and social events, or features the choice between chicken and roast beef.

Research and Testing

Whether a school goes it alone or brings on experts, teachers need to be much more familiar with the services of research and the uses of testing. If research passes administrators by, it passes right over most classroom teachers. Yet there is research that shows what new programs work, which may work, and which were poor ideas in the first place. If, for example, a school system learns through research that the ECRI (Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction) program, Distar, Portage, Corrective Reading, or Morphographic Spelling brings about dramatic results, teachers in the system should be encouraged or required to try these programs. Typically, an innovation is tried by a few teachers, not evaluated with any reliable or valid plan, and then abandoned as the teachers change jobs, leave the system, or lose interest. Any school that sponsors inservice sessions on "the rights of students and teachers" and neglects research that points to available programs for improving teaching and learning ought to do some rethinking.

For example, *Report on Educational Research* (Capitol Publications, Washington, D.C.), is a national journal that carries accounts of such programs, but to the regular classroom teacher who might read it, the programs might as well be in Mongolia. *Curriculum Report*, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals; *Research for Better Schools* (1700 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19103); and the Research and Development publications of CEMREL, Inc. in St. Louis also disseminate findings of educational research. A good supplement in most school systems would be an in-house journal that described projects—successful and unsucessful—that teachers carry on locally. Some schools hold conferences where teachers make 30-minute presentations about projects they are carrying out. The value of such local research is that for teachers who want to learn more, their source is right down the street.

Teachers and administrators also need to know the basic language of statistics. They need to know how to construct reliable and valid tests. They need to learn how to build banks of test questions based on what they teach. The anti-testing educators have an easy time convincing teachers of the evils of local and standardized testing, because teachers do not have requisite knowledge; they have not had the opportunity or the inclination to use testing services properly.

The members of one high school social studies department, unhappy with the standardized tests they were expected to use, decided to make up their own. They went about the task conscientiously, coding questions to topics, preparing pre-tests and post-tests, developing an "A" test and a "B" test of each kind, one more difficult than the other. When the tests were scored and the results discussed, it proved that one teacher had been more successful than others with economics, another with geography, still another with facts, and another with generalizations. It also proved that many of their questions did not seek out the material they supposed they had taught. They had not charted the types of questions (recall, comprehension, application) or the topics addressed by the questions. Moreover, the questions themselves were poorly writ-

ten. The "cores" or "stems" of multiple choice questions were often written at too high a reading level, and the choices gave answers away.

Those social studies teachers were on the way to doing something important, but they missed the mark by a wide margin. They simply lacked adequate knowledge of testing and research design.

Many teachers may not like or understand testing and research, but without close attention to these, teaching will remain fragmented and random, and inservice will be ineffectual as well. The advent of competency testing will not help, because few school systems have the interest, energy, or time to construct their own tests. They will look to publishing companies for their test materials. When test scores are made public, the public will clamor; but the schools will continue to teach much as they always have, for lack of attention to the uses of testing.

Some people liken school systems to big government. There is a lot of talk about improvement but, they say, the institution is too large for meaningful change to occur. I disagree. Teachers and administrators can be taught the rudiments of testing and research. Testing specialists can work with individual teachers. Teachers can design their own tests, and the results will show them what direction to take to help strong students maintain their achievement and weak students become stronger. These things can be accomplished, through inservice training. The sooner, the better.

Colleges and Contracts

I have been explicit in stating my opinion about teacher education institutions, and I have at least implied reservation about collective bargaining. Yet both could contribute to the effectiveness of inservice training.

There is much to be said for close liaison between teacher-education institutions and school systems, *provided* that the latter have determined their needs, and *provided* that the former are prepared to enter into a truly collaborative relationship. The ordinary relationship is little more than a func-

tion of the colleges' need for schools where their undergraduates can satisfy the certification requirement of practice teaching, and of the schools' need for consultants with education credentials. If the relationship depended upon the real needs of the schools, local or regional arrangements might be made with institutions with the resources and flexibility to meet those needs. For example, a school system in which foreign languages were a major part of the curriculum might develop close ties with a college with a strong language department. The relationship would give prospective teachers of foreign languages challenging opportunities for practice teaching at the same time that it afforded the school well-trained practice teachers, as well as a reliable source of certified teachers. Similar arrangements might be made for any subject in a school's basic curriculum—and for some of the additional instructional responsibilities (like special education) that are so frequently given to the schools these days. Although such arrangements might easily assume tacitly accepted permanence, they need not be forever; and the proliferation and changing roles of state colleges, not to say the initiatives that a number of private colleges are taking, make such arrangements plausible. The effect, of course, would be to relieve schools of the necessity to compensate for inadequate preservice training, and make it possible for them to get on with the kind of inservice education that would make competent teachers better teachers of their subjects.

Is there any way that teacher contracts can contribute to making inservice training more effective and respectable? Probably not, as long as inservice training remains a bone of contention. At present, control of inservice training is of great importance to teachers' unions at every level—local, state, and national; and school management tends to view the union effort to gain control as an infringement of management's right or responsibility.

Perhaps a starting point for teachers and administrators is to begin a dialogue on what it is they want students to learn, what skills and knowledge teachers must have to bring about such learning, and what school boards and administrators

need to provide a healthy atmosphere for it. The next question becomes the time needed during the course of a year to help all personnel meet the goals. How much inservice time must be scheduled for the summer? Will the school board pay for summer workshops? How many inservice sessions can be scheduled during any one month? And management must remember that new obligations are always likely to upset plans and schedules. The special education law (P.L. 94-142) is a good example: explanation of the forms and procedures required inservice time that had not been anticipated. When will such ad hoc matters be discussed? If contract stipulations for inservice activity were negotiated on the basis of commonly understood needs, teachers' contracts would contribute to the improvement of inservice training.

III. Four Successful Programs

In examining what I consider successful inservice approaches, I have discovered at least three touchstones. First, the program must have at its heart the improvement of the teacher's grasp of his *subject*. As I have suggested, a classroom teacher who peddles from an empty wagon cannot probe a student's answer or raise the ante in a discussion; he cannot speak to each student's ability. He cannot properly organize or re-organize materials or sort out supportive articles. He cannot make learning sequential, cannot point to precedents, cannot project into the future. In short, he cannot make sense and gain the full respect of his students. It is not enough to be personable and caring, or to have a few flashy techniques.

Second, an inservice program must have *strength*. By this, I mean that the program cannot be a one-shot or one-day affair, but an activity that has follow-up. How many of us can no longer use a foreign language we once learned for the simple reason that we have not had the opportunity frequently to reinforce our skills? Teachers need to be in situations where their inservice training is constantly reviewed, rejuvenated, and used.

Third, an inservice program must have clear, predetermined, short-range goals which are followed promptly by

evaluation. Teachers need to see what results from their new knowledge. Too often new ideas are tried, accepted, and dropped because no mirror reflects what happened. The easy part of inservice education is to come up with an idea. The hard part is to follow up, reassess, and examine results. Good follow-up usually includes ongoing teacher contact, whereby the original participants have opportunities to meet with each other to share ideas again.

The National Writing Project

An outgrowth of the Bay Area Writing Project in California, the National Writing Project is dedicated to the improvement of student writing through the improvement of teacher writing. At each of 67 NWP sites now in 31 states across the country, the project takes the design of the original Bay Area program. Based on recommendations, interviews, and the proven quality of their classroom work, some 25 teachers of writing are invited each summer to take part in what might be called a writing boot camp. They meet all day, four days a week for five weeks, to study, discuss, and write. They discuss problems in the teaching of writing, listen to scholars and experts, study research. They present and demonstrate (to each other) approaches to teaching writing. And they write, write, write, sharing and discussing what they write in small groups. They must agree to serve as teacher-consultants if they are selected, and many go on to conduct inservice activities in their own schools.

Recently I visited the Northern Virginia NWP site. I was most impressed by what I learned of the project's follow-up and evaluation. During the school year following their boot camp, teachers met regularly, both in their small summer writing groups and together. In the small groups, they shared more of their own writing; in the large group they discussed problems related to their teaching, caught up with new ideas and research, and reinforced each other with accounts of students' writing successes and their own. They learned from each other how to assess students' difficulties quickly, and how students can assess their own difficulties and measure their

own improvement. Periodically they checked a random sampling of student papers from the huge Fairfax County system for evidence of the techniques they learned.

One of the teachers told me that the meetings were uplifting. Sharing writing, she said, "bares your soul," and she had overcome her loneliness as a teacher. Good teachers had found each other, and she believed they would keep up their association. She now felt that she was doing something important, that her work was seen by others as important. Another teacher expressed her pleasure in telling members of her department and other departments about her new skills, and she was about to start a workshop for parents.

I came away with the impression that the Northern Virginia Writing Project has created an association of teachers who have a new sense of professionalism and who will improve the condition of writing. Moreover, the project demonstrates that schools and colleges can work together to improve inservice eduation.

The National Humanities Faculty

Based in Concord, Massachusetts, the National Humanities Faculty was established in 1968 to improve education in the humanities by helping teachers achieve a more comprehensive grasp of subject matter, and by assisting them to design and teach effective courses. Teachers and other staff members of a school or school district may apply, as a group, for assistance in getting a course of study started or in improving classroom instruction. If the application is accepted, NHF will assign, without charge, scholars and other qualified advisors to work closely with members of the group for several days during a school year and in a summer workshop of four to six weeks' duration. The primary focus of this collaboration is academic. Teachers broaden and deepen knowledge of subject matter in their own fields and in related fields, while they develop or redevelop curricula.

Needless to say, they have much more benefit than they would have from the one-day stand of a consultant who disappears when the day is done. There is close coordination before

and after every inservice session; there is a product in the form of a teaching unit or course of study; and there is evaluation. It is worth noting that NHF insists on a commitment of time on the part of schools that are assisted. Teachers (and often administrators, as well) are to be released from regular responsibilities to work with the assigned consultants. And during the summer workshops they are, for four or six weeks, in daily contact with scholars who are working on anything from the teaching of ethics to Greek art. Schoolteachers and administrators who have taken part in NHF inservice programs report that it is exhilarating to be challenged again by people whose knowledge of subject matter is truly expert. The payoff, of course, is back in each teacher's classroom.

The National Diffusion Network

The National Diffusion Network is a major project of the Federal government to share exemplary, teacher-developed programs. It is a nationwide system formed to assist local school districts improve their educational enterprise by adopting or adapting programs that have been developed elsewhere and designated as exemplary. Funds are available now for the diffusion of 200 that have been selected on the basis of three criteria: the programs show that they make a difference, they don't cost a lot, and they meet common teaching needs.

How does the Network work?

Every state has a "facilitator" center funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Each center is responsible for helping school districts introduce exemplary projects. When the center has identified a common teaching need within the state, teachers and administrators are invited to an information session, where available programs are discussed. Planning follows, and the center enlists experts for extensive inservice work. In Maine, for example, teachers in more than 50 schools will attend nine workshops over a period of three months to implement a language arts program that was developed in a New Jersey school district. Regional follow-up sessions will be held after the program is under way, and

teachers in the participating schools will be in constant touch to make sure that the program goes well. Although Network programs are not limited to subject matter, this inservice activity clearly has the touchstones of strength and evaluation.

The Advanced Placement Program

The Advanced Placement Program, administered by the College Board, provides opportunities for more able high school students, while still in high school, to take college-level courses. Courses are offered in 24 subjects (e.g., physics, studio art, calculus, French literature, English composition and literature). Students then take AP examinations and may receive advanced standing, credit, and placement from the college or university of their choice.

Although much of the current information on AP courses emphasizes the time and money they save students, the original intention of the program was to improve articulation of the curriculum between high school and college. Equally notable, however, is the contribution of Advanced Placement programs to teacher renewal and professional development. In this respect, the Advanced Placement program is an excellent and often overlooked form of inservice teacher training. Participating teachers receive comprehensive course description booklets which include sample questions and suggested teaching strategies, recommended reading and audio-visual material. In addition, teachers and administrators may attend summer institutes, workshops, and graduate-level courses to begin, expand, or improve their Advanced Placement programs. Workshops, materials, and consultation services are also provided by the AP office of the College Board on a continuing basis throughout the school year to participating schools and teachers.

IV. Summing Up

Whether or not readers find the suggestions in this paper practicable or plausible, they should understand that no school can develop a dependably constructive inservice plan before

administrators and teachers have a clear sense of educational direction. They must have definite goals, and they must determine as specifically as possible what they need and lack in order to approach their goals confidently. Given the confusion in education today, many schools would be well advised to call a halt to the inservice programs they are now sponsoring, and make defining goals and determining needs the first order of business.

It is my conviction that teachers need most (or most teachers need) greater breadth and depth of knowledge of the subjects they are expected to teach. They also need the kind of specialized skills that the effective use of testing requires—or special education, or teaching gifted students. Inservice education should, and can, be the ordinary way to meet such needs.

Inservice education stands in desperate need of improvement and respectability. It must merit the respect of teachers, whose effectiveness depends upon it. It must be respected by school board members who authorize it and by citizens whose taxes pay for it. Unless inservice education improves substantially, it cannot be respectable.

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